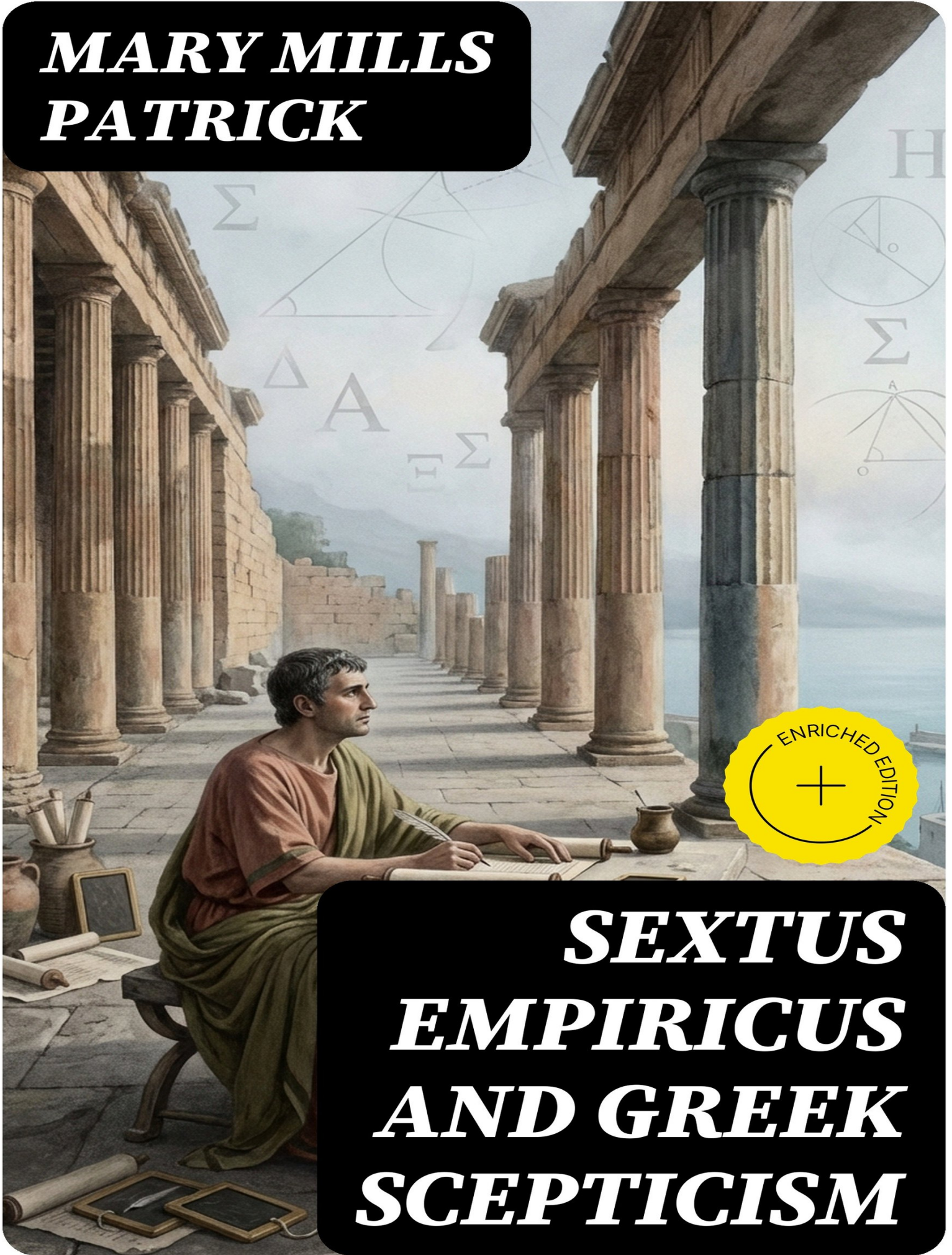


**MARY MILLS  
PATRICK**

**SEXTUS  
EMPIRICUS  
AND GREEK  
SCEPTICISM**



**Mary Mills Patrick**

# **Sextus Empiricus and Greek Scepticism**

**Enriched edition.**

*Introduction, Studies and Commentaries by Peter Boyd*

EAN 8596547252153

Edited and published by DigiCat, 2022



# Table of Contents

[Sextus Empiricus and Greek Scepticism](#)

[Memorable Quotes](#)

[Notes](#)

# **SEXTUS EMPIRICUS AND GREEK SCEPTICISM**

**[Main Table of Contents](#)**

PREFACE

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

PYRRHONIC SKETCHES

SEXTUS EMPIRICUS.

BOOK I.

CHAPTER I.

CHAPTER II.

CHAPTER III.

CHAPTER IV.

CHAPTER V.

CHAPTER VI.

CHAPTER VII.

CHAPTER VIII.

CHAPTER IX.

CHAPTER X.

CHAPTER XI.

CHAPTER XII.

CHAPTER XIII.

CHAPTER XIV.

CHAPTER XV.

[CHAPTER XVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXV.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXVIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXIX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXX.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXI.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIII.](#)  
[CHAPTER XXXIV.](#)

# PREFACE

## Table of Contents

The following treatise on Sextus Empiricus and Greek Scepticism has been prepared to supply a need much felt in the English language by students of Greek philosophy. For while other schools of Greek philosophy have been exhaustively and critically discussed by English scholars, there are few sources of information available to the student who wishes to make himself familiar with the teachings of Pyrrhonism. The aim has been, accordingly, to give a concise presentation of Pyrrhonism in relation to its historical development and the Scepticism of the Academy, with critical references to the French and German works existing on the subject. The time and manner of the connection of Sextus Empiricus with the Pyrrhonean School has also been discussed.

As the First Book of the *Hypotyposes*[\[1\]](#), or Pyrrhonic Sketches by Sextus Empiricus, contains the substance of the teachings of Pyrrhonism, it has been hoped that a translation of it into English might prove a useful contribution to the literature on Pyrrhonism, and this translation has been added to the critical part of the work.

In making this translation, and in the general study of the works of Sextus, the Greek text of Immanuel Bekker, Berlin, 1842, has been used, with frequent consultation of the text of J.A. Fabricius, 1718, which was taken directly from the existing manuscripts of the works of Sextus. The divisions into chapters, with the headings of the chapters in the translation, is the same as Fabricius gives from the

manuscripts, although not used by Bekker, and the numbers of the paragraphs are the same as those given by both Fabricius and Bekker. References to Diogenes Laertius[2] and other ancient works have been carefully verified.

The principal modern authors consulted are the following:

Ritter, *Geschichte der Philosophie*, II. Auf., Hamburg, 1836—38.

Zeller, *Philosophie der Griechen*, III. Auf., Leipzig, 1879—89.

Lewes, *History of Philosophy*, Vol. I., London, 1866.

Ueberweg, *History of Philosophy*, IV. ed., translated by Morris, 1871.

Brochard, *Les Sceptiques Grecs*, Paris, 1877.

Brochard, *Pyrrhon et le Scepticism Primitif*, No. 5, Ribot's *Revue Phil.*, Paris, 1885.

Saisset, *Le Scepticism Aenésidème-Pascal-Kant*, Paris, 1867.

Chaignet, *Histoire de la Psychologie des Grecs*, Paris, 1887-90.

Haas, *Leben des Sextus Empiricus*, Burghausen, 1882.

Natorp, *Forschungen zur Geschichte des Erkenntnisproblems bei den Alten*, Berlin, 1884.

Hirzel, *Untersuchungen zu Cicero's philosophischen Schriften*, Leipzig, 1877-83.

Pappenheim, *Erläuterung zu des Sextus Empiricus Pyrrhoneischen Grundzügen*, Heidelberg, 1882.

Pappenheim, *Die Tropen der Griechischen Skeptiker*, Berlin, 1885.

Pappenheim, *Lebensverhältnisse des Sextus Empiricus*, Berlin, 1887.

Pappenheim, *Der angebliche Heraclitismus des Skeptikers Ainesidemos*, Berlin, 1887.

Pappenheim, *Der Sitz der Schule der Griechischen Skeptiker*, *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, I. 1, S. 47, 1887.

Maccoll, *The Greek Sceptics from Pyrrho to Sextus*, London, 1869.

My grateful acknowledgments are due to Dr. Ludwig Stein, Professor of Philosophy in the University of Bern, for valuable assistance in relation to the plan of the work and advice in regard to the best authorities to be consulted. Thanks are also due to Dr. Louisos Iliou, of Robert College, Constantinople, for kind suggestions concerning the translation.

---

## CHAPTER I.

### Table of Contents

#### PAGE

THE HISTORICAL RELATIONS OF SEXTUS EMPIRICUS	1
---	---

Introductory paragraph.—The name of Sextus Empiricus. His profession.—The time when he lived.—The place of his birth.—The seat of the Sceptical School while Sextus was at its head.—The

character of the writings of Sextus Empiricus.

## CHAPTER II.

[Table of Contents](#)

### THE POSITION AND AIM OF PYRRHONIC SCEPTICISM 23

The subject-matter of the Hypotyposes.—The origin of Pyrrhonism.—The nomenclature of Pyrrhonism.—Its criterion.—Its aim.—ἐποχή and ἀταραξία.—The standpoint of Pyrrhonism.

## CHAPTER III.

[Table of Contents](#)

### THE SCEPTICAL TROPES 31

Origin of the name.—The ten Tropes of ἐποχή.—The First Trope.—The Second Trope.—The Third Trope.—The Fourth Trope.—The Fifth Trope.—The Sixth Trope.—The Seventh Trope.—The Eighth Trope.—The Ninth Trope.—The Tenth Trope.—The five Tropes of Agrippa.—The two Tropes.—The Tropes of Aenesidemus against Aetiology.

## **CHAPTER IV.**

### [Table of Contents](#)

AENESIDEMUS AND THE PHILOSOPHY OF HERACLITUS	63
---	----

Statement of the problem.—The theory of Pappenheim.—The theory of Brochard.—Zeller's theory.—The theory of Ritter and Saisset.—The theory of Hirzel and Natorp.—Critical examination of the subject.

## **CHAPTER V.**

### [Table of Contents](#)

CRITICAL EXAMINATION OF PYRRHONISM	81
------------------------------------	----

Pyrrhonism and Pyrrho.—Pyrrhonism and the Academy. Strength and weakness of Pyrrhonism.

---

THE FIRST BOOK OF THE PYRRHONIC SKETCHES BY SEXTUS EMPIRICUS, TRANSLATED FROM THE GREEK	101
---	-----

## **CHAPTER I.**

### [Table of Contents](#)

## The Historical Relations of Sextus Empiricus.

Interest has revived in the works of Sextus Empiricus in recent times, especially, one may say, since the date of Herbart. There is much in the writings of Sextus that finds a parallel in the methods of modern philosophy[1q]. There is a common starting-point in the study of the power and limitations of human thought[2q]. There is a common desire to investigate the phenomena of sense-perception, and the genetic relations of man to the lower animals, and a common interest in the theory of human knowledge.

While, however, some of the pages of Sextus' works would form a possible introduction to certain lines of modern philosophical thought, we cannot carry the analogy farther, for Pyrrhonism as a whole lacked the essential element of all philosophical progress, which is a belief in the possibility of finding and establishing the truth in the subjects investigated.

Before beginning a critical study of the writings of Sextus Empiricus, and the light which they throw on the development of Greek Scepticism, it is necessary to make ourselves somewhat familiar with the environment in which he lived and wrote. We shall thus be able to comprehend more fully the standpoint from which he regarded philosophical questions.

Let us accordingly attempt to give some details of his life, including his profession, the time when he lived, the place of his birth, the country in which he taught, and the general aim and character of his works. Here, however, we encounter great difficulties, for although we possess most of the writings of Sextus well preserved, the evidence which

they provide on the points mentioned is very slight. He does not give us biographical details in regard to himself, nor does he refer to his contemporaries in a way to afford any exact knowledge of them. His name even furnishes us with a problem impossible of solution. He is called Σέξτος ὁ ἐμπειρικός by Diogenes Laertius [1]: Ἡροδότου δὲ διήκουσε Σέξτος ὁ ἐμπειρικός οὗ καὶ τὰ δέκα τῶν σκεπτικῶν καὶ ἄλλα κάλλιστα' Σέξτου δὲ διήκουσε Σατορνῖνος ὁ Κυθῆνας ἐμπεικὸς καὶ αὐτός. Although in this passage Diogenes speaks of Sextus the second time without the surname, we cannot understand the meaning otherwise than that Diogenes considered Sextus a physician of the Empirical School. Other evidence also is not wanting that Sextus bore this surname. Fabricius, in his edition of the works of Sextus, quotes from the *Tabella de Sectis Medicorum* of Lambecius the statement that Sextus was called Empiricus because of his position in medicine.[2]

Pseudo-Galen also refers to him as one of the directors of the Empirical School, and calls him Σέξτος ὁ ἐμπειρικός. [3] His name is often found in the manuscripts written with the surname, as for example at the end of *Logic II*. [4] In other places it is found written without the surname, as Fabricius testifies, where Sextus is mentioned as a Sceptic in connection with Pyrrho.

[1] Diog. Laert. IX. 12, 116.

[2] Fabricius *Testimonia*, p. 2.

[3] Pseudo-Galen *Isag.* 4; Fabricius *Testimonia*, p. 2.

[4] Bekker *Math.* VIII. 481.

The Sceptical School was long closely connected with the Empirical School of medicine, and the later Pyrrhoneans, when they were physicians, as was often the case, belonged for the most part to this school. Menedotus of Nicomedia is the first Sceptic, however, who is formally spoken of as an Empirical physician,[1] and his contemporary Theodas of Laodicea was also an Empirical physician. The date of Menedotus and Theodas is difficult to fix, but Brochard and Hass agree that it was about 150 A.D.[2] After the time of these two physicians, who were also each in turn at the head of the Sceptical School,[3] there seems to have been a definite alliance between Pyrrhonism and Empiricism in medicine, and we have every reason to believe that this alliance existed until the time of Sextus.

[1] Diog. IX. 12, 115.

[2] Brochard *Op. cit. Livre IV.* p. 311.

[3] Diog. IX. 12, 116.

The difficulty in regard to the name arises from Sextus' own testimony. In the first book of the *Hypotyposes* he takes strong ground against the identity of Pyrrhonism and Empiricism in medicine. Although he introduces his objections with the admission that "some say that they are the same," in recognition of the close union that had existed between them, he goes on to say that "Empiricism is neither Scepticism itself, nor would it suit the Sceptic to take that sect upon himself", [1] for the reason that Empiricism maintains dogmatically the impossibility of knowledge, but he would prefer to belong to the Methodical School, which was the only medical school worthy of the Sceptic. "For this alone of all the medical sects, does not proceed rashly it

seems to me, in regard to unknown things, and does not presume to say whether they are comprehensible or not, but it is guided by phenomena.[2] It will thus be seen that the Methodical School of medicine has a certain relationship to Scepticism which is closer than that of the other medical sects." [3]

[1] *Hyp.* I. 236.

[2] *Hyp.* I. 237.

[3] *Hyp.* I. 241.

We know from the testimony of Sextus himself that he was a physician. In one case he uses the first person for himself as a physician,[1] and in another he speaks of Asclepius as "the founder of our science,"[2] and all his illustrations show a breadth and variety of medical knowledge that only a physician could possess. He published a medical work which he refers to once as *ιατρικὰ ὑπομνήματα*, [3] and again as *ἐμπειρικὰ ὑπομνήματα*. [4] These passages probably refer to the same work,[5] which, unfortunately for the solution of the difficult question that we have in hand, is lost, and nothing is known of its contents.

In apparent contradiction to his statement in *Hypotyposes* I., that Scepticism and Empiricism are opposed to each other, in that Empiricism denies the possibility of knowledge, and Scepticism makes no dogmatic statements of any kind, Sextus classes the Sceptics and Empiricists together in another instance, as regarding knowledge as impossible [6] *ἀλλ' οἱ μὲν φασιν αὐτὰ μὴ καταλαμβάνεσθαι, ὥσπερ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς ἐμπειρίας ἰατροὶ καὶ οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς σκέψεως φιλόσοφοι*. In another case, on the contrary, he contrasts

the Sceptics sharply with the Empiricists in regard to the ἀπόδειξις. [7] οἱ δὲ ἐμπειρικοὶ ἀναιρουῦσιν, οἱ δὲ σκεπτικοὶ ἐν ἐποχῇ ταύτην ἐφύλαξαν.

[1] *Hyp.* ii. 238.

[2] *Adv. Math.* A. 260.

[3] *Adv. Math.* vii. 202.

[4] *Adv. Math.* A. 61.

[5] *Zeller Op. cit.* iii. 43.

[6] *Adv. Math.* viii. 191

[7] *Adv. Math.* VIII. 328.

Pappenheim thinks that Sextus belonged to the Methodical School, both from his strong expression in favor of that school in *Hyp.* I. 236, as above, and also because many of his medical opinions, as found in his works, agree with the teachings of the Methodical School, more nearly than with those of the Empiricists. Pappenheim also claims that we find no inconsistency with this view in the passage given where Sextus classes the Sceptics with the Empiricists, but considers that statement an instance of carelessness in expressing himself, on the part of Sextus.[1]

[1] *Lebensverhältnisse des Sex. Em.* 36.

The position of Pappenheim is assailable for the reason that in dealing with any problem regarding an author on the basis of internal evidence, we have no right to consider one of his statements worthy of weight, and another one unworthy, on the supposition that he expressed himself carelessly in the second instance. Rather must we attempt to find his true standpoint by fairly meeting all the

difficulties offered in apparently conflicting passages. This has been attempted by Zeller, Brochard, Natorp and others, with the general result that all things considered they think without doubt that Sextus belonged to the Empirical School. [1] His other references are too strong to allow his fidelity to it to be doubted. He is called one of the leaders of Empiricism by Pseudo-Galen, and his only medical work bore the title ἐμπειρικὰ ὑπομνήματα. The opinion of the writers above referred to is that the passage which we have quoted from the *Hypotyposes* does not necessarily mean that Sextus was not an Empiricist, but as he was more of a Sceptic than a physician, he gave preference to those doctrines that were most consistent with Scepticism, and accordingly claimed that it was not absolutely necessary that a Sceptic physician should be an Empiricist. Natorp considers that the different standpoint from which Sextus judges the Empirical and Methodical Schools in his different works is accounted for on the supposition that he was an Empiricist, but disagreed with that school on the one point only. [2] Natorp points out that Sextus does not speak more favourably of the medical stand of the Methodical School, but only compares the way in which both schools regarded the question of the possibility of knowledge, and thinks that Sextus could have been an Empiricist as a physician notwithstanding his condemnation of the attitude of the Empirical School in relation to the theory of knowledge. This difference between the two schools was a small one, and on a subtle and unimportant point; in fact, a difference in philosophical theory, and not in medical practice.

[1] Brochard *Op. cit.* Livre IV. 317; Zeller *Op. cit.* III. 15; Natorp *Op. cit.* p. 155.

[2] Natorp *Op. cit.* 157.

While we would agree with the authors above referred to, that Sextus very probably recognized the bond between the Empirical School of medicine and Pyrrhonism, yet to make his possible connection with that school the explanation of his name, gives him more prominence as a physician than is consistent with what we know of his career. The long continued union of Empiricism and Scepticism would naturally support the view that Sextus was, at least during the earlier part of his life, a physician of that school, and yet it may be that he was not named Empiricus for that reason. There is one instance in ancient writings where Empiricus is known as a simple proper name.[1] It may have been a proper name in Sextus' case, or there are many other ways in which it could have originated, as those who have studied the origin of names will readily grant, perhaps indeed, from the title of the above-named work, ἐμπειρικὰ ὑπομνήματα. The chief argument for this view of the case is that there were other leaders of the Sceptical School, for whom we can claim far greater influence as Empiricists than for Sextus, and for whom the surname Empiricus would have been more appropriate, if it was given in consequence of prominence in the Empirical School. Sextus is known to the world as a Sceptic, and not as a physician. He was classed in later times with Pyrrho, and his philosophical works survived, while his medical writings did not, but are chiefly known from his own mention of them. Moreover, the passage which we have quoted from the *Hypotyposes* is too strong to allow us easily to believe that Sextus remained all his life a member of the Empirical School. He could hardly have said, "Nor would it suit the Sceptic to take that sect

upon himself," if he at the same time belonged to it. His other references to the Empirical School, of a more favorable character, can be easily explained on the ground of the long continued connection which had existed between the two schools. It is quite possible to suppose that Sextus was an Empiricist a part of his life, and afterwards found the Methodical School more to his liking, and such a change would not in any way have affected his stand as a physician.

[1] Pappenheim *Leb. Ver. Sex. Em.* 6.

In regard to the exact time when Sextus Empiricus lived, we gain very little knowledge from internal evidence, and outside sources of information are equally uncertain. Diogenes Laertius must have been a generation younger than Sextus, as he mentions the disciple of Sextus, Saturninus, as an Empirical physician.[1] The time of Diogenes is usually estimated as the first half of the third century A.D.,[2] therefore Sextus cannot be brought forward later than the beginning of the century. Sextus, however, directs his writings entirely against the Dogmatics, by whom he distinctly states that he means the Stoics,[3] and the influence of the Stoics began to decline in the beginning of the third century A.D. A fact often used as a help in fixing the date of Sextus is his mention of Basilides the Stoic, [4] ἀλλὰ καὶ οἱ στωϊκοί, ὡς οἱ περὶ Βασιλείδην. This Basilides was supposed to be identical with one of the teachers of Marcus Aurelius.[5] This is accepted by Zeller in the second edition of his *History of Philosophy*, but not in the third for the reason that Sextus, in all the work from which this reference is taken, *i.e.* *Math.* VII.—XI., mentions no one